

CHAPTER 4

Job having warmly given vent to his passion, and so broken the ice, his friends here come gravely to give vent to their judgment upon his case, which perhaps they had communicated to one another apart, compared notes upon it and talked it over among themselves, and found they were all agreed in their verdict, that Job's afflictions certainly proved him to be a hypocrite; but they did not attack Job with this high charge till by the expressions of his discontent and impatience, in which they thought he reflected on God himself, he had confirmed them in the bad opinion they had before conceived of him and his character. Now they set upon him with great fear. The dispute begins, and it soon becomes fierce. The opponents are Job's three friends. Job himself is respondent. Elihu appears, first, as moderator, and at length God himself gives judgment upon the controversy and the management of it. The question in dispute is whether Job was an honest man or no, the same question that was in dispute between God and Satan in the first two chapters. Satan had yielded it, and durst not pretend that his cursing his day was a constructive cursing of his God; no, he cannot deny but that Job still holds fast his integrity; but Job's friends will needs have it that, if Job were an honest man, he would not have been thus sorely and thus tediously afflicted, and therefore urge him to confess himself a hypocrite in the profession he had made of religion: "No," says Job, "that I will never do; I have offended God, but my heart, notwithstanding, has been upright with him;" and still he holds fast the comfort of his integrity. Eliphaz, who, it is likely, was the senior, or of the best quality, begins with him in this chapter, in which,

I. He bespeaks a patient hearing (v. 2).

II. He compliments Job with an acknowledgment of the eminence and usefulness of the profession he had made of religion (v. 3, 4).

III. He charges him with hypocrisy in his profession, grounding his charge upon his present troubles and his conduct under them (v. 5, 6).

IV. To make good the inference, he maintains that man's wickedness is that which always brings God's judgments (v. 7-11).

V. He corroborates his assertion by a vision which he had, in which he was reminded of the incontestable purity and justice of God, and the meanness, weakness, and sinfulness of man (v. 12-21). By all this he aims to bring down Job's spirit and to make him both penitent and patient under his afflictions.

~~<800>~~ JOB 4:1-6

THE ADDRESS OF ELIPHAZ

In these verses,

I. Eliphaz excuses the trouble he is now about to give to Job by his discourse (v. 2): "*If we assay a word with thee, offer a word of reproof and counsel, wilt thou be grieved and take it ill?*" We have reason to fear thou wilt; but there is no remedy: "*Who can refrain from words?*" Observe,

1. With what modesty he speaks of himself and his own attempt. He will not undertake the management of the cause alone, but very humbly joins his friends with him: "We will commune with thee." Those that plead God's cause must be glad of help, lest it suffer through their weakness. He will not promise much, but begs leave to assay or attempt, and try if he could propose any thing that might be pertinent, and suit Job's case. In difficult matters it becomes us to pretend no further, but only to try what may be said or done. Many excellent discourses have gone under the modest title of *Essays*.

2. With what tenderness he speaks of Job, and his present afflicted condition: "If we tell thee our mind, *wilt thou be grieved?* Wilt thou take it ill? Wilt thou lay it to thy own heart as thy affliction or to our charge as our fault? Shall we be reckoned unkind and cruel if we deal plainly and faithfully with thee? We desire we may not; we hope we shall not, and should be sorry if that should be ill resented which is well intended." Note, We ought to be afraid of grieving any, especially those that are already in grief, lest we add affliction to the afflicted, as David's enemies, ~~<800>~~ Psalm

69:26. We should show ourselves backward to say that which we foresee will be grievous, though ever so necessary. God himself, though he afflicts justly, does not afflict willingly, ~~2083~~ Lamentations 3:33.

3. With what assurance he speaks of the truth and pertinency of what he was about to say: *Who can withhold himself from speaking?* Surely it was a pious zeal for God's honour, and the spiritual welfare of Job, that laid him under this necessity of speaking. "Who can forbear speaking in vindication of God's honour, which we hear reprov'd, in love to thy soul, which we see endangered?" Note, It is foolish pity not to reprove our friends, even our friends in affliction, for what they say or do amiss, only for fear of offending them. Whether men take it well or ill, we must with wisdom and meekness do our duty and discharge a good conscience.

II. He exhibits a twofold charge against Job.

1. As to his particular conduct under this affliction. He charges him with weakness and faint-heartedness, and this article of his charge there was too much ground for, v. 3-5. And here,

(1.) He takes notice of Job's former serviceableness to the comfort of others. He owns that Job had instructed many, not only his own children and servants, but many others, his neighbours and friends, as many as fell within the sphere of his activity. He did not only encourage those who were teachers by office, and countenance them, and pay for the teaching of those who were poor, but he did himself instruct many. Though a great man, he did not think it below him (king Solomon was a preacher); though a man of business, he found time to do it, went among his neighbours, talked to them about their souls, and gave them good counsel. O that this example of Job were imitated by our great men! If he met with those who were ready to fall into sin, or sink under their troubles, his words upheld them: a wonderful dexterity he had in offering that which was proper to fortify persons against temptations, to support them under their burdens, and to comfort afflicted consciences. He had, and used, the tongue of the learned, knew how to speak a word in season to those that were weary, and employed himself much in that good work. With suitable counsels and comforts he *strengthened the weak hands* for work and service and the spiritual warfare, and the feeble knees for bearing up the man in his journey and under his load. It is not only our duty to *lift up our own hands that hang down*, by quickening and encouraging ourselves in the way of

duty (⁸⁰²Hebrews 12:12), but we must also strengthen the weak hands of others, as there is occasion, and do what we can to confirm their feeble knees, by saying *to those that are of a fearful heart, Be strong,* ²⁸³Isaiah 35:3, 4. The expressions seem to be borrowed thence. Note, Those should abound in spiritual charity. A good word, well and wisely spoken, may do more good than perhaps we think of. But why does Eliphaz mention this here?

[1.] Perhaps he praises him thus for the good he had done that he might make the intended reproof the more passable with him. Just commendation is a good preface to a just reprehension, will help to remove prejudices, and will show that the reproof comes not from ill will. Paul praised the Corinthians before he chided them, ⁴¹²1 Corinthians 11:2.

[2.] He remembers how Job had comforted others as a reason why he might justly expect to be himself comforted; and yet, if conviction was necessary in order to comfort, they must be excused if they applied themselves to that first. The *Comforter shall reprove,* ³⁴³John 16:8.

[3.] He speaks this, perhaps, in a way of pity, lamenting that through the extremity of his affliction he could not apply those comforts to himself which he had formerly administered to others. It is easier to give good counsel than to take it, to preach meekness and patience than to practise them. *Facile omnes, cum valemus, rectum consilium aegrotis damus* — *We all find it easy, when in health, to give good advice to the sick.* — *Terent.*

[4.] Most think that he mentions it as an aggravation of his present discontent, upbraiding him with his knowledge, and the good offices he had done for others, as if he had said, “Thou that hast taught others, why dost thou not teach thyself? Is not this an evidence of thy hypocrisy, that thou hast prescribed that medicine to others which thou wilt not now take thyself, and so contradictest thyself, and actest against thy own know principles? Thou that teachest another to faint, dost thou faint? ⁴¹²Romans 2:21. Physician, heal thyself.” Those who have rebuked others must expect to hear of it if they themselves become obnoxious to rebuke.

(2.) He upbraids him with his present low-spiritedness, v. 5. “*Now that it has come upon thee, now that it is thy turn to be afflicted, and the bitter cup that goes round is put into thy hand, now that it touches thee, thou faintest, thou art troubled.*” Here,

[1.] He makes too light of Job's afflictions: "It *touches* thee." The very word that Satan himself had used, ^{<Rom>} Job 1:11, 2:5. Had Eliphaz felt but the one-half of Job's affliction, he would have said, "It smites me, it wounds me;" but, speaking of Job's afflictions, he makes a mere trifle of it: "It touches thee and thou canst not bear to be touched." *Noli me tangere* — *Touch me not*.

[2.] He makes too much of Job's resentments, and aggravates them: "Thou faintest, or thou art beside thyself; thou ravest, and knowest not what thou sayest." Men in deep distress must have grains of allowance, and a favourable construction put upon what they say; when we make the worst of every word we do not as we would be done by.

2. As to his general character before this affliction. he charges him with wickedness and false-heartedness, and this article of his charge was utterly groundless and unjust. How unkindly does he banter him, and upbraid him with the great profession of religion he had made, as if it had all now come to nothing and proved a sham (v. 6): "*Is not this thy fear, thy confidence, thy hope, and the uprightness of thy ways?* Does it not all appear now to be a mere pretence? For, hadst thou been sincere in it, God would not thus have afflicted thee, nor wouldst thou have behaved thus under the affliction." This was the very thing Satan aimed at, to prove Job a hypocrite, and disprove the character God had given of him. When he could not himself do this to God, but he still saw and said, *Job is perfect and upright*, then he endeavoured, by his friends, to do it to Job himself, and to persuade him to confess himself a hypocrite. Could he have gained that point he would have triumphed. *Habes confitentem reum* — *Out of thy own mouth will I condemn thee*. But, by the grace of God, Job was enabled to hold fast his integrity, and would not bear false witness against himself. Note, Those that pass rash and uncharitable censures upon their brethren, and condemn them as hypocrites, do Satan's work, and serve his interest, more than they are aware of. I know not how it comes to pass that this verse is differently read in several editions of our common English Bibles; the original, and all the ancient versions, put *thy hope* before *the uprightness of thy ways*. So does the Geneva, and most of the editions of the last translation; but I find one of the first, in 1612, has it, *Is not this thy fear, thy confidence, the uprightness of thy ways, and thy hope?* Both the Assembly's Annotations and Mr. Pool's have that reading; and an edition in 1660 reads it, "*Is not thy fear thy confidence, and the uprightness of thy ways thy hope?* Does it not appear now that all the religion both of thy

devotion and of thy conversation was only in hope and confidence that thou shouldst grow rich by it? Was it not all mercenary?" The very thing that Satan suggested. *Is not thy religion thy hope, and are not thy ways thy confidence?* so Mr. Broughton. Or, "Was it not? Didst thou not think that that would be thy protection? But thou art deceived." Or, "Would it not have been so? If it had been sincere, would it not have kept thee from this despair?" It is true, *if thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength, thy grace, is small* (²¹⁰Proverbs 24:10); but it does not therefore follow that thou hast no grace, no strength at all. A man's character is not to be taken from a single act.

~~800~~ JOB 4:7-11

THE ADDRESS OF ELIPHAZ

Eliphaz here advances another argument to prove Job a hypocrite, and will have not only his impatience under his afflictions to be evidence against him but even his afflictions themselves, being so very great and extraordinary, and there being no prospect at all of his deliverance out of them. To strengthen his argument he here lays down these two principles, which seem plausible enough: —

I. That good men were never thus ruined. For the proof of this he appeals to Job's own observation (v. 7): "*Remember, I pray thee; recollect all that thou hast seen, heard, or read, and give me an instance of any one that was innocent and righteous, and yet perished as thou dost, and was cut off as thou art.*" If we understand it of a final and eternal destruction, his principle is true. None that are innocent and righteous perish for ever: it is only a *man of sin* that is a *son of perdition*, (⁵¹⁰2 Thessalonians 2:3. But then it is ill applied to Job; he did not thus perish, nor was he cut off: a man is never undone till he is in hell. But, if we understand it of any temporal calamity, his principle is not true. *The righteous perish* (²⁵⁰Isaiah 57:1): *there is one event both to the righteous and to the wicked* (²⁰⁰Ecclesiastes 9:2), both in life and death; the great and certain difference is after death. Even before Job's time (as early as it was) there were instances sufficient to contradict this principle. Did not righteous Abel *perish being innocent?* and was he not cut off in the beginning of his days? Was not righteous Lot burnt out of house and harbour, and forced to

retire to a melancholy cave? Was not righteous Jacob *a Syrian ready to perish*? ^{<636>}Deuteronomy 26:5. Other such instances, no doubt, there were, which are not on record.

II. That wicked men were often thus ruined. For the proof of this he vouches his own observation (v. 8): “*Even as I have seen, many a time, those that plough iniquity, and sow wickedness, reap accordingly; by the blast of God they perish*, v. 9. We have daily instances of that; and therefore, since thou dost thus perish and art consumed, we have reason to think that, whatever profession of religion thou hast made, thou hast but ploughed iniquity and sown wickedness. Even as I have seen in others, so do I see in thee.”

1. He speaks of sinners in general, politic busy sinners, that take pains in sin, for they plough iniquity; and expect gain by sin, for they sow wickedness. Those that plough plough in hope, but what is the issue? *They reap the same*. They shall of the *flesh reap corruption* and ruin, ^{<667>}Galatians 6:7, 8. The harvest will be *a heap in the day of grief and desperate sorrow*, ^{<271>}Isaiah 17:11. He shall reap *the same*, that is, the proper product of that seedness. That which the sinner sows, he *sows not that body that shall be*, but God will give it a body, a body of death, *the end of those things*, ^{<667>}Romans 6:21. Some, by iniquity and wickedness, understand wrong and injury done to others. Those who plough and sow them shall reap the same, that is, they shall be paid in their own coin. Those who are troublesome shall be troubled, ^{<506>}2 Thessalonians 1:6; ^{<605>}Joshua 7:25. *The spoilers shall be spoiled* (^{<231>}Isaiah 33:1), and those that led captive shall *go captive*, ^{<663>}Revelation 13:10. He further describes their destruction (v. 9): *By the blast of God they perish*. The projects they take so much pains in are defeated; God cuts asunder the cords of those ploughers, ^{<98>}Psalms 129:3, 4. They themselves are destroyed, which is the just punishment of their iniquity. *They perish*, that is, they are destroyed utterly; *they are consumed*, that is, they are destroyed gradually; and this by the blast and breath of God, that is,

(1.) By his wrath. His anger is the ruin of sinners, who are therefore called *vessels of wrath*, and his breath is said to *kindle Tophet*, ^{<233>}Isaiah 30:33. *Who knows the power of his anger?* ^{<911>}Psalms 90:11.

(2.) By his word. He speaks and it is done, easily and effectually. The Spirit of God, in the word, consumes sinners; with that he slays them,

^{<306>}Hosea 6:5. Saying and doing are not two things with God. The man of sin is said to be consumed with the *breath of Christ's mouth*, ^{<318>2} Thessalonians 2:8. Compare ^{<310>}Isaiah 11:4; ^{<632>}Revelation 19:21. Some think that in attributing the destruction of sinners to the blast of God, and *the breath of his nostrils*, he refers to the wind which blew the house down upon Job's children, as if they were therefore *sinners above all men because they suffered such things*. ^{<412>}Luke 13:2.

2. He speaks particularly of tyrants and cruel oppressors, under the similitude of lions, v. 10, 11. Observe,

(1.) How he describes their cruelty and oppression. The Hebrew tongue has five several names for lions, and they are all here used to set forth the terrible tearing power, fierceness, and cruelty, of proud oppressors. They roar, and rend, and prey upon all about them, and bring up their young ones to do so too, ^{<318>}Ezekiel 19:3. The devil is a roaring lion; and they partake of his nature, and do his lusts. They are strong as lions, and subtle (^{<408>}Psalm 10:9; 17:12); and, as far as they prevail, they lay all desolate about them.

(2.) How he describes their destruction, the destruction both of their power and of their persons. They shall be restrained from doing further hurt and reckoned with for the hurt they have done. An effectual course shall be taken,

[1.] That they shall not terrify. The voice of their roaring shall be stopped.

[2.] That they shall not tear. God will disarm them, will take away their power to do hurt: *The teeth of the young lions are broken*. See ^{<412>}Psalm 3:7. Thus shall the remainder of wrath be restrained.

[3.] That they shall not enrich themselves with the spoil of their neighbours. Even *the old lion* is famished, and *perishes for lack of prey*. Those that have surfeited on spoil and rapine are perhaps reduced to such straits as to die of hunger at last.

[4.] That they shall not, as they promise themselves, leave a succession: *The stout lion's whelps are scattered abroad*, to seek for food themselves, which the old ones used to bring in for them, ^{<312>}Nahum 2:12. *The lion did tear in pieces for his whelps*, but now they must shift for themselves. Perhaps Eliphaz intended, in this, to reflect upon Job, as if he, being the *greatest of all the men of the east*, had got his estate by spoil and used his

power in oppressing his neighbours, but now his power and estate were gone, and his family was scattered: if so, it was a pity that a man whom God praised should be thus abused.

<ROM>JOB 4:12-21

THE ADDRESS OF ELIPHAZ

Eliphaz, having undertaken to convince Job of the sin and folly of his discontent and impatience, here vouches a vision he had been favoured with, which he relates to Job for his conviction. What comes immediately from God all men will pay a particular deference to, and Job, no doubt, as much as any. Some think Eliphaz had this vision now *lately*, since he came to Job, putting words into his mouth wherewith to reason with him; and it would have been well if he had kept to the purport of this vision, which would serve for a ground on which to reprove Job for his murmuring, but not to condemn him as a hypocrite. Others think he had it *formerly*; for God did, in this way, often communicate his mind to the children of men in those first ages of the world, <8885>Job 33:15. Probably God had sent Eliphaz this messenger and message some time or other, when he was himself in an unquiet discontented frame, to calm and pacify him. Note, As we should comfort others with that wherewith we have been comforted (<4004>2 Corinthians 1:4), so we should endeavour to convince others with that which has been powerful to convince us. The people of God had not then any written word to quote, and therefore God sometimes notified to them even common truths by the extraordinary ways of revelation. We that have Bibles have there (thanks be to God) a more sure word to depend upon than even visions and voices, <4019>2 Peter 1:19. Observe,

I. The manner in which this message was sent to Eliphaz, and the circumstances of the conveyance of it to him.

1. It was *brought to him secretly*, or by stealth. Some of the sweetest communion gracious souls have with God is in secret, where no eye sees but that of him who is all eye. God has ways of bringing conviction, counsel, and comfort, to his people, unobserved by the world, by private whispers, as powerfully and effectually as by the public ministry. *His secret is with them*, <4254>Psalm 25:14. As the evil spirit often steals good

words out of the heart (^{<439>}Matthew 13:19), so the good Spirit sometimes steals good words into the heart, or ever we are aware.

2. *He received a little thereof*, v. 12. And it is but a little of divine knowledge that the best receive in this world. We know little in comparison with what is to be known, and with what we shall know when we come to heaven. *How little a portion is heard of God!* ^{<834>}Job 26:14. *We know but in part*, ^{<432>}1 Corinthians 13:12. See his humility and modesty. He pretends not to have understood it fully, but something of it he perceived.

3. It was brought to him in the *visions of the night* (v. 13), when he had retired from the world and the hurry of it, and all about him was composed and quiet. Note, The more we are withdrawn from the world and the things of it the fitter we are for communion with God. When we are *communing with our own hearts, and are still* (^{<404>}Psalm 4:4), then is a proper time for the Holy Spirit to commune with us. When others were asleep Eliphaz was ready to receive this visit from Heaven, and probably, like David, was *meditating upon God in the night-watches*; in the midst of those good thoughts this thing was brought to him. We should hear more from God if we thought more of him; yet some are surprised with convictions in the night, ^{<834>}Job 33:14, 15.

4. It was prefaced with terrors: *Fear came upon him, and trembling*, v. 14. It should seem, before he either heard or saw any thing, he was seized with this trembling, which shook his bones, and perhaps the bed under him. A holy awe and reverence of God and his majesty being struck upon his spirit, he was thereby prepared for a divine visit. Whom God intends to honour he first humbles and lays low, and will have us all to serve him with holy fear, and to rejoice with trembling.

II. The messenger by whom it was sent — *a spirit*, one of the good angels, who are employed not only as the ministers of God's providence, but sometimes as the ministers of his word. Concerning this apparition which Eliphaz saw we are here told (v. 15, 16),

1. That it was real, and not a dream, not a fancy. *An image* was before his eyes; he plainly saw it; at first it passed and repassed before his face, moved up and down, but at length it *stood still* to speak to him. If some have been so knavish as to impose false visions on others, and some so

foolish as to be themselves imposed upon, it does not therefore follow but that there may have been apparitions of spirits, both good and bad.

2. That it was indistinct, and somewhat confused. He *could not discern the form thereof*, so as to frame any exact idea of it in his own mind, much less to give a description of it. His conscience was to be awakened and informed, not his curiosity gratified. We know little of spirits; we are not capable of knowing much of them, nor is it fit that we should: all in good time; we must shortly remove to the world of spirits, and shall then be better acquainted with them.

3. That it puts him into a great consternation, so that his hair stood on end. Ever since man sinned it has been terrible to him to receive an express from heaven, as conscious to himself that he can expect no good tidings thence; apparitions therefore, even of good spirits, have always made deep impressions of fear, even upon good men. How well it is for us that God sends us his messages, not by spirits, but by men like ourselves, *whose terror shall not make us afraid!* See ²¹⁷⁸Daniel 7:28; 10:8, 9.

III. The message itself. Before it was delivered *there was silence*, profound silence, v. 16. When we are to speak either from God or to him it becomes us to address ourselves to it with a solemn pause, and so to set bounds about the mount on which God is to come down, and not be hasty to utter any thing. It was in a still small voice that the message was delivered, and this was it (v. 17): “*Shall mortal man be more just than God, the immortal God? Shall a man be thought to be, or pretend to be, more pure than his Maker? Away with such a thought!*”

1. Some think that Eliphaz aims hereby to prove that Job's great afflictions were a certain evidence of his being a wicked man. A mortal man would be thought unjust and very impure if he should thus correct and punish a servant or subject, unless he had been guilty of some very great crime: “If therefore there were not some great crimes for which God thus punishes thee, man would be more just than God, which is not to be imagined.”

2. I rather think it is only a reproof of Job's murmuring and discontent: “Shall a man pretend to be more just and pure than God? more truly to understand, and more strictly to observe, the rules and laws of equity than God? Shall *Enosh*, mortal and miserable man, be so insolent; nay, shall *Geber*, the strongest and most eminent man, man at his best estate, pretend to compare with God, or stand in competition with him?” Note, It is most

impious and absurd to think either others or ourselves more just and pure than God. Those that quarrel and find fault with the directions of the divine law, the dispensations of the divine grace, or the disposals of the divine providence, make themselves more just and pure than God; and those who thus *reprove God, let them answer it*. What! sinful man! (for he would not have been mortal if he had not been sinful) short-sighted man! Shall he pretend to be more just, more pure, than God, who, being his Maker, is his Lord and owner? Shall the clay contend with the potter? What justice and purity there is in man, God is the author of it, and therefore is himself more just and pure. See ^{<394b>}Psalm 94:9, 10.

IV. The comment which Eliphaz makes upon this, for so it seems to be; yet some take all the following verses to be spoken in vision. It comes all to one.

1. He shows how little the angels themselves are in comparison with God, v. 18. Angels are God's servants, waiting servants, working servants; they are his ministers (^{<394b>}Psalm 104:4); bright and blessed beings they are, but God neither needs them nor is benefited by them and is himself infinitely above them, and therefore,

(1.) He puts no trust in them, did not repose a confidence in them, as we do in those we cannot live without. There is no service in which he employs them but, if he pleased, he could have it done as well without them. he never made them his confidants, or of his cabinet-council, ^{<425b>}Matthew 24:36. He does not leave his business wholly to them, but *his own eyes run to and fro through the earth*, ^{<443b>}2 Chronicles 16:9. See this phrase, ^{<831b>}Job 39:11. Some give this sense of it: "So mutable is even the angelical nature that God would not trust angels with their own integrity; if he had, they would all have done as some did, left their first estate; but he saw it necessary to give them supernatural grace to confirm them."

(2.) He charges them with folly, vanity, weakness, infirmity, and imperfection, in comparison with himself. If the world were left to the government of the angels, and they were trusted with the sole management of affairs, they would take false steps, and everything would not be done for the best, as now it is. Angels are intelligences, but finite ones. Though not chargeable with iniquity, yet with imprudence. This last clause is variously rendered by the critics. I think it would bear this reading, repeating the negation, which is very common: *He will put no trust in his*

saints; nor will he glory in his angels (in angelis suis non ponet gloriationem) or make his boast of them, as if their praises, or services, added any thing to him: it is his glory that he is infinitely happy without them.

2. Thence he infers how much less man is, how much less to be trusted in or gloried in. If there is such a distance between God and angels, what is there between God and man! See how man is represented here in his meanness.

(1.) Look upon man in his life, and he is very mean, v. 19. Take man in his best estate, and he is a very despicable creature in comparison with the holy angels, though honourable if compared with the brutes. It is true, angels are spirits, and the souls of men are spirits; but,

[1.] Angels are pure spirits; the souls of men *dwell in houses of clay*: such the bodies of men are. Angels are free; human souls are housed, and the body is a cloud, a clog, to it; it is its cage; it is its prison. It is a house of clay, mean and mouldering; an earthen vessel, soon broken, as it was first formed, according to the good pleasure of the potter. It is a cottage, not a house of cedar or a house of ivory, but of clay, which would soon be in ruins if not kept in constant repair.

[2.] Angels are fixed, but the very *foundation* of that house of clay in which man dwells *is in the dust*. A house of clay, if built upon a rock, might stand long; but, if founded in the dust, the uncertainty of the foundation will hasten its fall, and it will sink with its own weight. As man was made out of the earth, so he is maintained and supported by that which cometh out of the earth. Take away that, and his body returns to its earth. We stand but upon the dust; some have a higher heap of dust to stand upon than others, but still it is the earth that stays us up and will shortly swallow us up.

[3.] Angels are immortal, but man is soon crushed; the *earthly house of his tabernacle is dissolved*; he *dies and wastes away, is crushed like a moth* between one's fingers, as easily, as quickly; one may almost as soon kill a man as kill a moth. A little thing will destroy his life. He is *crushed before the face of the moth*, so the word is. If some lingering distemper, which consumes like a moth, be commissioned to destroy him, he can no more resist it than he can resist an acute distemper, which comes roaring upon him like a lion. See ~~AND~~ Hosea 5:12-14. Is such a creature as this to be

trusted in, or can any service be expected from him by that God who puts no trust in angels themselves?

(2.) Look upon him in his death, and he appears yet more despicable, and unfit to be trusted. Men are mortal and dying, v. 20, 21.

[1.] In death *they are destroyed*, and *perish for ever*, as to this world; it is the final period of their lives, and all the employments and enjoyments here; their place will know them no more.

[2.] They are dying daily, and continually wasting: *Destroyed from morning to evening*. Death is still working in us, like a mole digging our grave at each remove, and we so continually lie exposed that we are killed all the day long.

[3.] Their life is short, and in a little time they are cut off. It lasts perhaps but from morning to evening. It is but a day (so some understand it); their birth and death are but the sun-rise and sun-set of the same day.

[4.] In death all their excellency passes away; beauty, strength, learning, not only cannot secure them from death, but must die with them, nor shall their pomp, their wealth, or power, descend after them.

[5.] Their wisdom cannot save them from death: *They die without wisdom*, die for want of wisdom, by their own foolish management of themselves, digging their graves with their own teeth.

[6.] It is so common a thing that nobody heeds it, nor takes any notice of it: *They perish without any regarding it*, or laying it to heart. The deaths of others are much the subject of common talk, but little the subject of serious thought. Some think the eternal damnation of sinners is here spoken of, as well as their temporal death: *They are destroyed, or broken to pieces, by death, from morning to evening; and, if they repent not, they perish for ever* (so some read it), v. 20. They perish for ever because they regard not God and their duty; they *consider not their latter end*,

²⁰⁰Lamentations 1:9. They have no excellency but that which death takes away, and they die, they die the second death, for want of wisdom to lay hold on eternal life. Shall such a mean, weak, foolish, sinful, dying creature as this pretend to be *more just than God and more pure than his Maker*? No, instead of quarrelling with his afflictions, let him wonder that he is out of hell.